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Abstract

This article uses Max Weber's model of charismatic authority to analyse the role of the adolescent protagonist of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. Kim's charisma means that the radical instability he represents is highly appealing to the reader: Kim plays the Great Game for its own sake, rather than in support of English authority, and invites the reader likewise to enjoy reading *Kim* for its own sake, rather than for the meaning to be established at the end.

However, this article argues that Kim's adolescence, and what Weber calls the 'routinization' with which charisma must end, imply an imagined end to Kim's potentially revolutionary energies. By representing radical potential in charismatic form, Kim is a highly attractive representation of the permanent process of colonialism and its instabilities; he also promises a 'routinised' adulthood in which his own radical potential, and the instabilities it represents, can be imagined to end.

Introduction: 'Kim was English'

The narrator of Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901) offers a germane analysis of the novel's hero when he remarks that 'what [Kim] loved was the game for its own sake' (5). Kim's unconcern with the purpose of the commissions he performs for 'sleek and shiny young men of fashion' at the start of the novel is in contrast to the narrator's attention to the 'intrigue' behind these commissions; by describing Kim as 'lithe and inconspicuous', and his 'prowl' as 'stealthy', the narrator evokes the secret motives and intentions which Kim, however little he cares, acts to promote (5). Kim's indifference to, and the narrator's insistence on, the broader significance of Kim's commissions anticipates the representation of Kim's role in the Great Game with which the novel is primarily concerned; those games which Kim plays for sheer pleasure, are, for the narrator, significant as acts performed within a greater system. The narrator is interested in Kim's purpose within the Great Game; Kim himself participates entirely for the sake of the game itself.

Consequently, that famous image with which *Kim* opens, of Kim sitting 'in defiance of municipal orders, astride the gun Zam-Zammah' is of far more significance to the narrator than to the child (3). To Kim, straddling the gun is nothing more than another 'game'; to the narrator, however, 'who hold Zam-Zammah [...] hold the Punjab; for the great green-bronze piece is always first of the conqueror's loot' (3). To the narrator, Kim's game is a symbolic indication of who is in control of the Punjab; Kim's game is 'Great' to, and through, the narrator. When Kim 'turn[s] now and again from his king-of-the-castle game [...] to make a rude remark to the native policeman', and 'the old Punjabi grin[s] tolerantly' in response, the narrator implies, once again, that Kim's insolent playfulness has a greater significance than either the child or the policeman, enjoying the game itself, know or care for (5-6). The scene becomes an exchange between a traditional figure of authority – the policeman – and what Zohreh T. Sullivan describes as 'a new image of authority – the boy in control of the gun'

(*Narratives of Empire* 149). Consciously or otherwise, Kim here asserts, and the policeman assents to, the triumph of the new over the traditional form of authority.

Of course, for the narrator, '[t]here was some justification for Kim [...] since the English held the Punjab, and Kim was English': the narrator incorporates Kim into a hierarchy based on nationality, and thereby makes the boy's game representative of English colonial dominance (3). However, the narrator's attempt to explain the hierarchy displayed by Kim's position, and thus to confirm the Englishness of authority, is undermined by the description of the boy himself which follows;

[t]hough he was burned black as any native; though he spoke the vernacular by preference, and his mother-tongue in a clipped uncertain singsong; though he consorted on terms of perfect equality with the small boys of the bazaar; Kim was white. (3)

By suggesting that Kim is English '[t]hough he was burned black as any native', the narrator articulates the specific signs that are considered *not* English, and it is only through these signs of alterity that a conception of English national identity is constituted (3, emphasis added).¹ In *Kim*, English national identity is defined as the space created by the signs of alterity inscribed, by the narrator, on Kim himself: Englishness is implicitly constituted by what Kim is not.

The narrator therefore refines his statement from 'Kim was English' to 'Kim was white'. This clarifies that Kim's 'Englishness' justifies his power not as a nationality, but as a synonym for race, but the idea of an invisible, essential whiteness is profoundly undermined if Kim has a claim to it. When 'the half caste woman who looked after him' 'told the missionaries that she was Kim's mother's sister', miscegenation in Kim's ancestry is

apparently confirmed (3). Although the nurse's claim is refuted (considerably later in the chapter) when we find that 'Kim's mother had been Irish, too', the Irish had dubious claim to racial whiteness in the period.² Teresa Hubel has, furthermore, illustrated that in British India 'racial flexibility came to be seen as a characteristic of people who belonged to non-elite classes': Kim, 'a poor white of the very poorest', is one of these people (Hubel 233; Kipling 14). Miscegenation is therefore not only suggested; Kim's racial purity is almost precluded by the characteristic racial flexibility of his Irishness and class.

Consequently Kim, as the embodiment of 'Englishness' or 'whiteness', points to the fundamental impossibility of colonial authority, to what Homi Bhabha calls the 'impossibility of its identity' (Bhabha 114). For Bhabha, the 'differences' (religious, racial, etc.), which define the colonised, are represented as mutations or hybrid forms of the colonialist. However, this 'hybridization' of colonial authority is 'a partial and double force ... that disturbs the visibility of the colonial presence and makes the recognition of its authority problematic' (111). The construction of what Bhabha calls 'discriminatory identity effects', such as class and race, differentiates the identity of those over whom authority is exercised from that of those who have authority, but the necessary representation of these differences – the necessity to *represent* 'colonial authority' and its hybrid forms – problematises the identification of represented 'colonial authority' with the authority that has the right to represent it: the 'identity' of colonial authority is therefore an impossibility.

Therefore, although many critics read the narrator's insistence that 'Kim was English' as 'a residual "truth" which cannot be erased', what Don Randall calls Kim's 'hybrid ethnicity' in fact creates a space between this statement and its embodiment in Kim himself (Low 213; Randall 136).³ The differential 'ethnicities' of race, religion, language, inscribed to sustain colonial authority, or what Bhabha refers to as 'culture', are 'transformed by the unpredictable and partial desire of hybridity': culture becomes 'a space of intervention and

agonism...the trace of the displacement of symbol to sign' (115). Kim's hybridity transforms him from symbol to sign, transforms the narrator's statement that 'Kim was English' from an articulation of symbolic truth to an expression of the desire to interpret that truth from the sign of the boy on the gun: Kim creates a space between the symbolic truth of English authority and the narrator's desire to establish that truth.

Kim's Charisma

While the narrator endeavours to situate Kim's game astride Zam-Zammah within the Great Game of English colonial authority, Kim continues to enjoy the game for its own sake. The policeman's 'grin' indicates that he responds to Kim's ostentatious impudence, and simultaneously to his unconscious authority, with outright pleasure. The shop-woman who gives Kim food when he begs on behalf of the lama similarly betrays her pleasure in the audacity with which Kim 'gravely' complains that she has not given him enough; despite answering 'fretfully', she fills Kim's bowl, and 'laugh[s]' and chats with this 'Little Friend of all the World' (16).

Max Weber conceptualises what he calls charismatic authority as a form of power in which 'it is the charismatically qualified leader as such who is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in his revelation, his heroism, or his exemplary qualities' (Weber 216). The policeman and the shop-woman are the first of many characters throughout the text who comply with Kim's instructions and demands, who submit to Kim's authority, simply because they take such pleasure in its playful assertion; this 'voluntary compliance' is for Weber the mark of 'genuine' charismatic domination (212). The narrator's recognition that the policeman takes pleasure in what is in fact an assertion of Kim's authority therefore marks the child as an exemplar of Weber's charismatic leader.

The narrator's language when he describes Kim indicates that he too recognises the charisma of Kim's authority. When the narrator describes how Kim 'danced off ere the end of [the shop-woman's] sentence, dodging pariah dogs and hungry acquaintances.' or how he 'burst into a flood of tears, protesting that the lama was his father and his mother' so that 'all the carriage bade the guard be merciful' and allow Kim and the lama travel for free, his own delight in Kim's self-sufficient energy is clear (16, 32). John Kucich suggests that 'Kim's "magical gifts"[...] make his triumphs seem effortless, the efflorescence of his very being rather than the result of malicious conquest or ordinary labour' (Kucich 162). The charisma, and the authoritative effect of charisma, which Kucich here describes, are manifested in the very language with which the narrator describes Kim and his triumphs.

Thus, although the narrator desires that Kim's authority symbolise the power of the English, white coloniser, he also represents that authority to be exerted, enjoyed, and submitted to, for its own sake. Paul Zweig's comparative analysis of what he differentiates as 'heroes' and 'adventurers' gestures towards the potentially radical significance of Kim's exertion of power for its own sake. According to Zweig, the adventurer differs from with the hero because:

he is not "loyal"[...] Quite the contrary, he fascinates because he undermines the expected order. He possesses the qualities of the "hero": skill, resourcefulness, courage, intelligence. But he is the opposite of selfless. He is hungry; "heightened," not as an example, but as a presence, a phenomenon of sheer energy [...] who cannot be relied on, not because [he is] treacherous, but because the order of [his] needs is purely idiosyncratic. (Zweig 35)

As a presence, a phenomenon of sheer energy, who fascinates because he undermines the expected order, Kim fits aptly into this formulation of the adventurer. Although he is a potential asset to any system within which his energy is contained, and is particularly qualified by his charismatic authority to recruit followers for that system, he has no loyalty to it; the idiosyncratic whims which direct Kim's energy mean that his qualities could therefore be directed, with equally efficacy, against the system of English colonialism.

As Hannah Arendt argues, moreover, this 'purposelessness is the very charm of Kim's existence' (Arendt 217). When Kim is first recognised as a Sahib, it seems to him 'a time for caution and fancy'; he participates in 'Life as a Sahib' because it is 'amusing so far; but he touched it with a cautious hand' (88, 101).⁴ Prepared to be a Sahib so long as it is 'amusing' to him, Kim is consistently cautious to resist identification with this, as with any other guise.⁵ Indeed, as Clara Claiborne Parks observes, he 'never once expresses loyalty to, or even awareness of the British Empire as a political or value-laden entity, as any kind of entity at all' (Parks 559). Although his new role as Sahib prompts him to 'consider his own identity, a thing he had never done before', the outcome of this consideration is telling: Kim states that "I am a Sahib [...] No; I am Kim. This is the great world, and I am only Kim. Who is Kim?" (120). He not only 'declines to be a Sahib', as Ian Baucom observes; it is by asserting his own identity that he rejects the 'Sahib' identity imposed on him: he is not a Sahib *because* he is Kim (Baucom 353).

Being Kim is enough to secure the voluntary compliance of many characters within the text: that Kim is Kim, which is to say 'not-a-Sahib', consequently indicates that this authority is charismatic insofar as it is purposeless, insofar as it is exerted for its own sake *rather than* in support of English colonial authority. The very purposelessness of Kim's power therefore substantiates Weber's claim that charisma is 'a specifically revolutionary force'; Kim's power operates not only irrespective of, but in opposition to, its attributed

purpose within colonial power (244). For Randall, Kim's ethnic hybridity makes him '[...]at least potentially, a site of resistance': coupled with his charisma, this potential resistance to traditional forms of authority becomes both attractive and authoritative for its own sake (147). Exerted for its own sake, the authority which Kim represents to the narrator is a charismatic, and thus a potentially revolutionary, force within colonial India.

Narrative, Colonialism, and Charisma

For Peter Brooks, 'what animates us as readers is [...] the active quest [...] for those shaping ends that, terminating the dynamic process of reading, promise to bestow meaning and significance on the beginning and the middle'; this 'meaning' depends 'on a fully predicated narrative sentence, on a narrative totality' (Brooks 19, 60). According to Brooks, the reader is animated by the desire for meaning, which depends on the end, on narrative totality. However, Francis G. Hutchins has demonstrated that an 'ideology of permanence [...] exerted a strong pressure on British life and thought' during the colonisation of India; one of the characters in *Kim* testifies to this ubiquitous ideology when she claims that 'the sahibs never grow old. They dance and they play like children when they are grandfathers' (Hutchins xii; Kipling 219). In *Kim* as in the British imagination more generally the sahib and colonial culture are, ideologically at least, permanent. The permanent 'aimless process' which Arendt suggests is the 'very essence' of colonialism is therefore in conflict with the desire for the end which, following Brooks, would bestow on colonialism its meaning (216). The ideology of colonialism is antithetical to the motivation of narrative totality for the reader of *Kim*.

Kim's charisma offers a provisional circumvention of this tension between the desire for narrative totality which, according to Brooks, motivates the reader, and the ideology of permanence which defined colonialism. Irving Howe suggests that, in answer to the repeated

question, '[w]ho is Kim?', 'each chapter will yield the happy answer that there are many answers'; this is, as Howe observes, one of the 'Pleasures of *Kim*' (Howe 330). Kim's purposelessness is his charm not only in colonial India, as represented in the narrative, but also in that narrative itself. One of the forces motivating the reader of *Kim* – the quest for the answer to the question '[w]ho is Kim?', - is deferred by another motivating force - the pleasure of exploring, with Kim, the many possible answers to that question. Just as Kim enjoys the game for its own sake, so the reader can enjoy *Kim*, character and text, for its own sake as well.

Thereby, *Kim* constitutes a representation of the empire in which the pleasure of reading for its own sake temporarily modulates the desire for narrative totality. The satisfaction of the desire to establish the meaning of Kim's games is delayed while the pleasure of reading about Kim is indulged; if Kim serves metonymically for colonial India, the ending to this representation of empire is therefore deferred in a representation of process in which both the process and its representation are, seemingly, for their own sake.

For Jed Esty, *Kim* 'attaches its hero's maturation to the same receding horizon as India's political modernisation', a maturation/modernisation which is never quite (allowed or acknowledged to be) achieved (Esty 11). As embodied by Kim, colonial India is less stable than Esty suggests: Kim's charismatic authority represents the appealing possibility of alternative forms of authority. Moreover, the motive of finally establishing that Kim is English is, at least temporarily, subsumed to the pleasure of reading about his charisma for its own sake: Kim is an alternative to the quest to fulfil the narrator's desire, to the quest for narrative totality. He thereby disrupts the recognition of not only of the Englishness of colonial authority, but of the narrative authority which attempts to assert that Englishness. Kim's charisma complicates Esty's analysis of his adolescence as the representation of

colonial stability; as a highly appealing alternative to such stability, Kim in fact undermines both it and the authority through which the narrator might represent it.

As Esty goes on to point out, however, Kim's youth 'comes with specific closural stakes that are invoked even when the closural plot of adulthood is banished from the text' (13).⁶ In Weber's theory, likewise, charisma is 'undiminished, consistent and effective only *in statu nascendi*': charisma is, necessarily, a process, the conclusion to which is what Weber calls its 'routinization', the diffusion of its radical potential (1121).⁷ If, as Esty suggests, Kim's adolescence comes with specific closural stakes, I suggest that adulthood is the 'closural stake', the conclusion, towards which the process of routinization moves in Kim's case. The revolutionary potential Kim embodies in adolescence will be routinized in adulthood, precisely because Kim's adulthood offers a closural stake (absent from the text though this adulthood ultimately is). *Kim* thus attaches its hero's adulthood not to the modernisation of the colonised nation, but to the stabilisation of colonial authority. The 'closural stake' invoked by Kim's youth is in fact the 'adulthood' of colonial authority itself.

Adolescent Charisma

U.C. Knoepfelmacher identifies other writing by Kipling which, like *Kim*, associates 'racial and national crossbreeding' with power; in these works, Kipling's 'endorsement of this evolutionary phenomenon' is nevertheless 'more guarded than it might seem' (Knoepfelmacher 925). Likewise the presentation, in *Kim*, of a potentially revolutionary subject of the British Empire is evidence not of Kipling's engagement with the implications of colonialism's fundamental contradictions, but of Phillip Wegner's assertion that 'despite his expressed desire to reform the practice of imperial rule, Kipling in no way questioned the deeper ontology of Empire' (Wegner 132). Although *Kim* represents a radical, because

charismatic, engagement with what Bhabha calls the impossibility of colonial authority, he also invokes an impending resolution to that impossibility.

For Weber, because charisma is only effective *in statu nascendi*, it is inherently ‘unstable’ (1121). Charismatic authority is fully recognised only as a threat to dominant authority; once the authority of the charismatic figure is established, his charisma is ‘diminished’. This is, moreover, inevitable, specifically because of ‘the desire to transform charisma...from a unique, transitory gift of grace of extraordinary times and persons into a permanent possession of everyday life’ (1121). In other words, it is the very desire for the charismatic leader that leads to what Weber calls the ‘routinization of his charisma’ (1121). The end towards which Kim’s charisma is in process is, inevitably, the end of his radical potential.

That end, moreover, is specifically invoked by what Esty refers to as the ‘closural stakes’ of youth: the end of Kim’s adolescence is simultaneous and synonymous with the routinization of his charisma. Kim’s response, when asked by Colonal Creighton whether he will work for the ‘Survey of India’ is obliquely suggestive: “[h]ow can I tell? I am only a boy. Wait till I am a man” (12).⁸ In boyhood, Kim represents radical indeterminacy: if the reader can ‘wait till he is a man’ the difficulties he embodies will, implicitly, come to an end. The essential significance of Kim’s charismatic adolescence for the text’s representation of colonial India is therefore, as Randall suggests, that ‘[w]hat distinguishes the child from the cultural other is the former’s capacity to progress, to access, with time and maturation, European adult subjectivity’: because the ethnic hybrid is embodied in an adolescent in *Kim*, the colonial authority that hybrid both represents and undermines has the capacity to access, in the future, a stable, ‘adult’ identity (42).

I suggest, furthermore, that because that adolescent is charismatic, the present, revolutionary contradictions of colonial authority he embodies have radical appeal to the

reader: the endless process of colonialism, and its concomitant perpetual instability, become charismatic as embodied in Kim. Because he is in the process of becoming a routinized adult, however, Kim nevertheless promises impending stability, to be attained specifically in his adulthood. Thus, through its charismatic adolescent protagonist, *Kim* represents the radical instability of colonial authority as a process the end of which will be the attainment of routinized, adult identity. Colonial identity will be attained when Kim is a man as, therefore, will the narrative totality predicated on this identity.

The progression of the charismatic adolescent towards the routinized totality of adulthood is implied throughout *Kim*; recalled initially as a ‘keen-eyed three-year-old baby’, Kim has ‘reached the years of indiscretion’ in the opening chapter; his youthful ‘indiscretion’ is described simultaneously with the assurance of his progress toward adulthood (3, 4). By Chapter Eleven, Kim seems to have become both less youthful and less ‘indiscrete’; on being asked for advice by a man whose child has fever, he:

tingled with pride. Three years ago he would have made a prompt profit on the situation and gone his way without a thought; but now, the very respect the Jat paid him proved that he was a man. (189)

As James H. Thrall observes, ‘the religious importance of being a chela for Kim, at least initially extends no further than [...how he] manipulates it to their advantage’, but his ‘increasing maturity’ prompts him to ‘help heal the Jat’s baby’ (Thrall 55). Kim the adolescent might have acted with charismatic authority to promote his own (and the lama’s) interest; Kim the man responds to – is influenced by – the possibility of attaining adult authority, and consequently behaves in a way that is more conventionally appropriate than charismatic.

The lama, watching, articulates what the reader has already sensed: for the moment at least, Kim “‘is no longer a child, but a man’” (192). Not only has Kim started to become ‘a man’; he has, by the very act which indicated this to the lama, begun to assimilate with conventionality. His impending adulthood and the routinization of his charisma are simultaneous, and are thus, implicitly, associated. Therefore, although Kim represents a radically appealing threat to colonial authority, this threat is finite because of his defining capacity, as a charismatic adolescent, to attain, in time, the routinized end of adult identity. The process of maturation, conflated with that of assimilation, indicates that Kim’s charismatically authoritative potential will be routinized in a narrative in which adulthood is what Brooks calls the ‘shaping’, meaningful, end.

Kucich suggests that ‘Kim’s ascension to manhood – the novel’s central theme – charts the incorporation of his extraordinary personal talents into a secret brotherhood of imperial espionage’: Kim’s adolescence implies an adulthood, and the transition from the former to the latter which the novel charts is also the transition from extraordinary, charismatic authority to routinized, English authority (161). Kim’s charisma is therefore a temporary deferral of the fulfilment of the narrator’s desire; just as the pleasure of reading is also the movement towards meaning, however temporarily indifferent the reader is to that meaning, so Kim’s games are also part of the Great Game of English colonialism, however indifferent Kim is to that significance. In a temporary adolescence, Kim’s authority is charismatic; in the adulthood towards which that adolescence progresses, that authority will be routinised, or incorporated, within the narrative totality of English colonial authority.

Narrating the Charismatic Adolescent

Kim’s participation in the colonial system is certain, as, therefore, is his assimilation within the narrative; despite Kim’s charismatic alterity to colonial and narrative authority,

neither is represented as subject to revolutionary change in the text itself. The charismatic adolescent is not, despite the narrator's opening assertion, a simple representative of English colonial authority, but nor can he ever fulfil his potential as an alternative to that authority. Rather, Kim is an imminently routinized charismatic alternative to those forms of authority, represented within and by narrative, with which he will eventually become identical and thus affirm. The image of the child simultaneously embodies the impossibility of colonialism in charismatic form, and promises a deferred adulthood in which that impossibility is transcended.

Consequently, as Satya P. Mohanty suggests, Kim's mode of perception presents 'unities and differences as *interpretable* social facts' and, in Kim's interpretation, these facts affirm the authority and eternity of white imperial rule (Mohanty 317). Kim's charisma supports the reader's voluntary compliance with his way of seeing colonial India: it validates the reader's recognition of the Empire as presented in *Kim*. However, this charismatic mode of perception must be, and demonstrably is, constituted within the narrative within which he is portrayed: Kim's interpretation of colonial India is therefore constituted such that it affirms the 'English' identity of authority which it is the narrator's desire to establish.

The description of the Grand Trunk Road is particularly illustrative of the absolute containment of Kim's authority. The scene is perceived through 'Kim's bright eyes', which 'were open wide'; his charisma ensures that the reader is likely to recognise the authority of those eyes, and to see things as Kim sees them (63). Through Kim's eyes, we see:

[a] broad, smiling river of life [...] new people and new sights at every side – castes he knew and castes that were altogether out of his experience [...] all India spread out to left and right. It was beautiful to behold [...] It was equally beautiful to watch the people, little clumps of red and blue and pink and saffron. (63-65)

Mohanty observes that '[t]he power of this passage consists as much in its syntactic modulation of all the different activities – in visual and aural terms –into a rhythmic explosion in the present moment, as in its crucial suggestion that it is Kim's open and receptive consciousness that makes this celebration of the present possible' (317). It is both the linguistic power of the description, and its attributed constitution within Kim's (white) consciousness which make this passage so effective a representation of 'the bounds of race' in Kipling's India.

However, the linguistic power of this description is, emphatically, not a product of Kim's consciousness. David H. Stewart's claim, that 'over half the book is written' in Urdu, points out by its obvious inaccuracy that the only language in which the book is written is 'Kipling's (or the omniscient narrator's)'; *Kim* is written entirely in English, and any other languages – including the Urdu in which Kim expresses himself - are represented only through the narrator's 'translation' (Stewart 52, 50). The narrator's role in translating Kim's consciousness is, moreover, made emphatically clear in this passage: 'Kim felt these things, though he could not give tongue to his feelings, and so contented himself with buying peeled sugarcane' (65). The two complementary aspects of this passage identified by Mohanty –the constitution of its message within Kim's consciousness and the forceful expression of this message in language – therefore demonstrate that Kim's charisma is necessarily and emphatically constituted within and thus contained by narrative. The fact that Kim felt these things, that it is Kim's consciousness that makes this celebration possible, is mitigated by the equally crucial fact that Kim could not 'give tongue to his feelings', and thus that it is the narrator's consciousness, as much as Kim's, which makes the reader's celebration possible. Therefore, although we participate in this view of 'all India spread out to left and right', because of the charismatic authority of Kim's open and receptive consciousness, we are in

fact unable to do so without the narrator's simultaneous authority to express, in powerful language, what Kim perceives. Our reading is animated by Kim's charisma, but is facilitated by the narrator's authority.

Therefore, although Kim's charisma complicates the desire for narrative resolution, for the 'closural stake' of adulthood, this charismatic child is nevertheless constituted emphatically and exclusively through the narrator's language. Kim's charismatic authority disrupts both the recognition of colonial authority and the desire for narrative closure, but adolescent charisma is nevertheless constituted within language that exceeds Kim's abilities; the narrator's authority to mediate and verbalise his consciousness covertly insists on narrative authority, and therefore on the inevitability of the closural stake – adulthood – invoked by a narrative of adolescence. Consequently, although, as the site of multiple desires, the charismatic adolescent represents radical instability, his adolescent charisma functions to sustain the (English, white) identity of colonial authority, as imagined in 'the adult', as an impending end.

Kim's charismatic existence therefore becomes intensely problematic towards the end of the novel. Towards the end of his journey across India and towards adulthood, Kim looks:

with strange eyes unable to take up the size and proportion and use of things [...] All that while he felt, though he could not put it into words, that his soul was out of gear with his surroundings – a cog-wheel unconnected with any machinery. (283)

The 'bright eyes' with which Kim compelled the reader to see the Grand Trunk Road have become 'strange', and Kim's singularity has become disconnection. By the end of the novel, the extraordinariness which constitutes Kim's charisma has become an obstacle to his participation in the 'machinery' around him.

Matthew Fellion observes that at this point, ‘Kim finally tires of the Game [...] wishing that “someone duly authorised would only take delivery” of the documents he has acquired’ (Fellion 904). Many critics identify this moment as particularly meaningful within the text; for these readers, as for Kim, the game is at this point continued less for its own sake than in the hope that ‘someone duly authorised’ will assimilate Kim within a greater, meaningful system.⁹ Once again, Kim ‘could not put [his crisis] into words’; this timely reminder that the narrator can and has articulated the crisis covertly identifies who that someone duly authorised is (238). In the opening scene, there is no justification for Kim’s authority that can be recognised within the structures of colonial authority; the narrator’s articulation of the crisis of his adolescent charisma affirms that, at the end, there *will be*, and that this justification is also a narrative resolution. Narrative totality and the affirmation of English colonial authority are the systems within which Kim’s games are always played and, therefore, which Kim will ultimately affirm.

Conclusion: ‘What Happens at the End of *Kim*?’¹⁰

Through its charismatic protagonist *Kim* represents radical alternatives to dominant forms of authority, in highly appealing form. However, what Esty describes as the ‘closural stakes’ invoked by Kim’s youth insist on adulthood as the end of this narrative; Weber’s conceptualisation of charisma insists that its end is ‘routinization’. Thus, the charismatic adolescent implies a routinized adulthood, even as he represents radically alternative authority: by attaining adulthood, Kim will affirm narrative authority and, therefore, the English ‘identity’ of colonial authority which it has been the narrator’s desire to establish. *Kim*, character and text, therefore represents radical alternatives to dominant authority within a narrative and thus within the context of the stable identity to be attained at its end.

Therefore, as M. Daphne Kutzer recognises, ‘the reader attracted to Kim and his adventures may also find him or herself attracted to some of the imperial underpinnings of the novel’; although Kim himself is an authority in his own right, rather than a subject of British authority, *Kim* works to contain the power of its charismatic protagonist within the structures of narrative and colonial authority to be affirmed with the attainment of Kim’s adulthood (Kutzer 17). Kim is charismatic only *in statu nascendi* within the colonial and narrative systems to which he is an alternative; as such, he can only ever be a *potential* alternative; adolescent charismatic authority only temporarily threatens the colonial and narrative systems through which, and only through which, that charisma can exist. Charismatic only in ascendance, Kim will ultimately be incorporated into the colonial system with the attainment of that closural stake, adulthood, which also locates him within the system of narrative totality.

This certain adulthood is not represented in *Kim*, which, as several critics note ‘stops abruptly [...] as if to cut off any vision of an *adult* Kim’ (Plotz 127). As Claibourne Parks suggests, this ending ‘elicits conflicting answers, not only on the level of event - will Kim continue as a spy- but the level of value-what does this entail for this attractive adolescent, and for the meaning of the book?’ (556). As any adult knows, adulthood is a continuation of, not a conclusion to, the journey represented in *Kim*; the imaginary completeness to be attained at the narrative end of adolescence is an impossibility implied in the inconclusive ending to this text. The perpetuation of the charismatic youth’s adolescence suggests, covertly, the inability of adulthood to achieve the stability with which it is invested, and perpetuates the present radical alternatives to colonial authority encountered in this liminal and authoritative figure.

Although Kim is not the ‘pure point of origin’ for an authoritative adult which, in Jacqueline Rose’s divisive view, characterises the child in children’s literature, that

authoritative adult is, nevertheless, present in the text as the conclusion toward which Kim is constantly moving (Rose 8). By remaining eternally on the brink of adulthood, Kim perpetuates the movement towards the authoritative adult; equally, then, he maintains the imaginary possibility that this adult identity will be established. Kutzer's suggestion, that Kim 'grows up to be the agent of the British invaders and colonisers of India', testifies to the power of this imaginary conclusion, by overlooking the fact that it is not actually reached (15). The impossibility of Kim's eternal adolescence may, as Esty argues, represent the impossibility of eternal colonial authority, but it nevertheless sustains the imaginary promise of it in his as-yet-unattained adulthood.

By ending the narrative of this charismatic youth just on the brink of his adulthood, moreover, the charismatic appeal of Kipling's adolescent is sustained indefinitely. Still charismatic, Kim perpetuates the desire for the charismatic leader that would routinize him. Still adolescent, Kim equally perpetuates, to return to Brooks, the narrative 'movement toward a meaning that would be the end of its movement' (56). The charismatic adolescent threatens to undermine colonial and narrative authority, but through her desire for him, the reader, paradoxically, participates in both. With Kim's eternally charismatic adolescence, the reader's desire is indefinitely prolonged, as, therefore, is her participation in the ideologically permanent movement towards the establishment of colonial and narrative authority.

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Notes

1. As John McBratney argues moreover, this semiotic model of cultural identity suggests 'not only the worth of individual cultures but also the relativity of all cultural value' (30). Englishness as a culture is therefore not inherently more 'valuable' than any other culture in *Kim*.

2. A frequently cited extract from a letter by Charles Kingsley suggests the racial ambiguity of the Irish in Victorian discourse; while on a trip to Ireland, Kingsley writes to his wife that ‘to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their skins, except when tanned by exposure, are as white as ours’ (qtd. in Kaplan 54). This quotation is cited in several studies, including Michael de Nie’s *The Eternal Paddy* and Kaori Nagai’s *Empire of Analogies*. See also Sue Walsh on the racial categorisation of the Irish in Kipling’s fiction.
3. In addition to Low, Randall, Noel Annan, Edward Said, and M. Daphne Kutzer read this statement as a ‘residual truth’. Along with Kaplan and Hubel, Nagai, Sullivan and Ian Baucom are among those who consider Kim’s ‘whiteness’ to be in doubt.
4. By ‘fancy’, of course, Kim means fabrication; he is, as his audience is quick to recognise, a ‘phenomenal little liar’ (89).
5. See James H. Thrall on Kim’s equally non-committal religious meanderings.
6. In Esty’s analysis, this suggests, ‘if slyly’, that the adolescence of the colonised people must come to an end, and with it, the justification for colonialism presented in the text. My analysis, reading Kim’s adolescence as representative of the *instability* of colonialism, reads his adulthood as the end not to colonialism itself, but to the instability of its authority.
7. “In the process of creation, formation, or construction” (*OED*).
8. The Survey of India is referred to as ‘the Great Game’ in *Kim*. See Baucom for a full analysis of the ‘Survey of India’ in *Kim*.
9. In addition to Fellion, Annan, Plotz and Esty are among those who single this passage out for discussion.
10. The question is the title of Zohreh T. Sullivan’s contribution (an extract from her *Narratives of Empire*) in the Norton Critical Edition of *Kim*. Critics disagree on the

answer to this question, but, perhaps inevitably, those who consider Kim's search for an identity to be successful are generally those, Annan, Said and Kutzer for example, who consider it to be established, through the 'residual truth' of his race, from the start.